Xmas Annual

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Last month,
TYCI turned three.

When we started the collective, there were only a couple of people involved. Now, we have a heady group in Glasgow itself and contributors based all over the world. Every day we are overwhelmed by the way in which what we do has resonated with people. This year, our group expanded a lot and we met lots of amazing people, as well as hosting events with the likes of Carrie Brownstein, Youth Man, Hannah Lou Clark, the Scottish Mental Health Arts and Film Festival and more.

Everyone in TYCI is a volunteer and there is no better feeling than sharing ideas with people who share your worldview, hoping to make a tiny difference, so thank you for being a part of that. Thank you for giving up your time to read our articles, sending us links and emails and tweets, and helping us shape a community we want to be a part of.

This zine is a bumper collection of some of the great things we have published this year. If you like what you see, please do drop us a line on contact.tyci@gmail.com or visit tyci.org.uk to get involved.

Here's to another three years.

Cover by Sophia Platts-Palmer
splattspalmer.wordpress.com

TALK NERDY TO ME

Warlords of Draenor, World of Warcraft's newest expansion, has just hit the shelves and gamers worldwide have gone crazy for it. But is Azeroth an inviting place for women? Fen McCallum spoke to Warcraft fan Lorna Atkinson to find out.

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What is The World of Warcraft (WOW)?

It's an MMO RPG, which is a Massive Multi Player Online Role Playing Game, where you have the Alliance and the Horde. There are different races, different classes, and you can explore this world.

What initially attracted you to WOW?

My boyfriend at the time was playing it, and a few of his friends were, and we had a lot of friends who were all in a group. We called ourselves Haggis Hunters… I was introduced through that, and now I've been playing for quite some time.

Are women represented differently to men in the game?

I would say women are sexualised a little bit more. My best example is whenever you're levelling a blood elf, there is a set of scale mail armour that for the men has trousers that are full, length trousers, but for women it's a bikini. It's the exact same armour statistically, but for men it's trousers, and for women it's a thong. It's definitely more sexualised to play a woman.

Are other players that you game with aware that you're female?

There are a few who are aware, and some that are not. I don't go out of my way to say I'm a female in the game because there are a few players out there who are just, well - it's an MMO RPG, and some people have nicknamed that; "Many Men Online Role Playing Girls". There are a few people with personalities like that.

Do they treat you any differently because of your gender?

No, it's never made a difference. No matter whether I've been my druid, and I've been healing, or I've been my hunter and playing DPS (Damage Per Second), it's never made a difference for me whether I'm male or female.

This is an excerpt. To read the full article and more in the Talk Nerdy series, visit tyci.org.uk.

SMART GIRLS AT THE PARTY

Naomi Dodds writes about her love for Amy Poehler's Smart Girls.

With the 'Lad Bible' shares, the 'Which Type of Pasta Are You?" quizzes and yet another school friend having yet another baby, Facebook is hardly rife with heart-warming life affirmation; but it can be. Enter Smart Girls. Smart Girls (also known as Amy Poehler's Smart Girls) is the brainchild of Amy Poehler (Leslie Knope, SNL alum, and one half of the best BFFs of all time) who is blurring the lines between life and fiction with her Knopeish dedication to all things Girl. Smart Girls launched a scant few years ago on Youtube as the web series "Smart Girls At The Party" with Poehler teaming up with friends Meredith Walker and Amy Miles to create anything from Talkshow-like segments with fellow Smart Girls, to profiles on regular Jos performing show and tell with all the smart stuff they know.

By far the runaway favourite of all the videos is the Ask Amy series, which is so beautifully simple it's almost infuriating. Girls ask Amy Poehler for advice: a barefaced, exhausted Amy Poehler (Often between takes on set of Parks & Rec) offers wit and wisdom in return. It's an infallible formula, especially given the sincerity and warmth that Poehler radiates even behind the tiredest of eyes. It parallels Rookie's 'Ask

a Grown...' series, in that youngsters (not exclusively girls) look to their elders to impart wisdom and knowledge that only experience can give. If you think only young people can benefit from this, you're wrong - I'm a 27 year old in a live-in relationship and you can bet your ass I still want to hear Amy Poehler's love advice.

From these humble-ish beginnings on Youtube they've since snowballed into a multi-channel entity, it's a social media hub, an advocacy group, and for a few lucky girls it's even a summer camp – which I like to think will be exactly like the Pawnee Goddesses – and while I might still get ID'd, unfortunately you have to actually be under 18 to attend. This really isn't something to be scoffed at in the internet age where things can spawn and die in the life span of a single Buzzfeed listicle, this is an enduring natural progression and it's a great barometer for Smart Girls that people are buying what they're selling. We're fast approaching a tipping point in the way we treat our girls and Smart Girls aren't the only ones who have noticed, they sit amongst other great initiatives like Black Girls Code, A Mighty Girl, GoldieBlox, and The Girl Effect all of whom are amassing followers, support and even making a living from this growing movement. And it's not a niche market - GoldieBlox ran a Superbowl ad last year, and if that isn't a herald in new attitudes towards girlhood, I'm not sure what is.

While people argue themselves silly over whether or not Nicki Minaj can be a role model in nothing but a thong and nipple pasties, or whether it's even fair to expect women to be role models while their male counterparts can behave however they like with little consequence, Smart Girls are quietly willing to take the mantle: They're role models, and proud of it. They hold an unwavering focus on the fundamentals of feminism – something that seem to get waylaid in our endless mobius strip discussion of Lena Dunham's bare breasts – and that is the notion that a woman can change the world, and they're just as good at it as boys are to boot.

Ultimately my favourite thing about Smart Girls is how diverse it is, both in its subject matter, and the women who contribute towards it. Smart Girls is a living breathing model of doing intersectionality 'right'. It's a slap in the face to both the Caitlin Moranic view of "literally [not giving] a shit about it" and the near-mythical Social Justice Warriors on the other side of the coin; it's a natural diversity that's not shamelessly shoe-horned into the discussion. It's "I am woman, hear me roar" but that woman might just happen to be trans, or in a wheelchair, or both.

Smart Girls is a safe space on the internet for girls, which in itself is something we should cling to like a life raft, and it's accessible and fun which are reasons enough to go along for the ride. Smart Girls is a fun, inspiring way to kill five minutes on Facebook without slipping into a pit of self-loathing afterward, and perhaps most importantly Smart Girls, at its essence is just women celebrating women: It's like Lilith Fair minus the angst. Plus frittatas.

For more on Smart Girls, visit amysmartgirls.com.

GRIEVING A LOST MOTHER

AS PART OF THE FEMINIST EXPERIENCE

An opinion piece by Angela Trowbridge.

With the unavoidable permeation of Netflix into the fabric of our society, I often find myself relying on the streaming service as a sort of security blanket. Like, I'll catch myself running episodes of Gilmore Girls in the background as I work through various responsibilities at home. Some of my favorite TV programmes require serious concentration, but Gilmore Girls only asks for a comfortable level of emotional intelligence. I can appreciate the campy, somehow still quite relevant jokes, and the various trials the characters are faced with. I enjoy observing Rory's friendships and budding romantic relationships. Most often, however, I think I subconsciously live vicariously through Rory's steady relationship with Lorelai - her approachable, loyal and present mother.

As a woman, I always find it gratifying and affirming to watch a well-written show telling female stories, and Gilmore Girls strikes emotional chords. Whilst there's the occasional cacophony when Rory and Lorelai bicker, they always find a way back to resolution and release, back to harmony. Rory may roll her eyes when her mom 'embarrasses' her, but they always have each other at the end of the episode. The mother-daughter dynamic in the show brings me the warm and fuzzy feelings, right alongside those of longing, jealousy, and even resentment. Whilst I sympathize with Rory, I also find myself wanting to shout at her, "But you still have a mother!" Whilst mothers like Lorelai are imperfect and can't possibly fix every single physical or emotional hurt, I idealize the idea of

living with my own, because I haven't for fifteen-and-a-half years.

When I heard the news that my mother had suddenly died, I was 10 years old. It was September of 1999, and I was just about to begin in a new school, for the fifth time. Grief came, as if it was a looming waterfall finally overtaking me, and I had been dreading its approach. Mere days before, I had imagined a scenario at my new school in which I had to explain to my classmates that my mom had died, and that they couldn't meet her because I didn't have one anymore. I had worried about this, and then it actually happened. My mother was not ill in the traditional sense — she struggled with addiction for years, and then suddenly, everything ended.

I try not to think about it too often because if I think about it enough, it brings on the waterworks. Tears can heal, but sometimes with this grief, I fear I could start crying like a fire hydrant and keep going until someone finally intervenes and cranks it off. When I do think about it, I reflect on many things, like how my mom won't ever know the person I am today. So many things have happened since that made me who I am. That year, I took up clarinet and stuck with it for 10 plus years. But she never heard me squeaking and squawking in the basement, on my way up to the principal clarinet seat by senior year in high school. She never helped me deal with pimples, or taught me to shave my legs, or not to shave my eyebrows (oops). My mom never got to show me how to properly turn down boys who ask girls out in their cars (and the girl feels she can't say no because it feels impolite and she's trapped in his car). My mom never got to help me apply to college, like Lorelai did for Rory. And it makes me sad - because she passed too soon. She was also often too ill to be able to do many of those things with me if she were here, which also makes me sad.

This is an excerpt. To read the full article visit tyci.org.uk/wordpress/lost-mother.

a note from the collective

TYCI is a not for profit collective run by women. Although we are based in Glasgow, we have an amazing variety of contributors who stretch far and wide across the globe. We are run entirely by volunteers who generously give up their own time, feelings, ideas, and often money to help us celebrate all things woman.

In the short while that we have been functioning, we have expanded from a small monthly club night to an international multimedia platform and events series. All of what we do now is formed entirely on passionate people coming forward to lend their own ideas of what they want to see and do with the collective.

We are always looking for more contributors to help broaden the discussion and so if you are ever interested in getting involved in the collective, please do contact us because we would love to hear from you.

You can find us on all the socials @tyciblog
or email us at contact.tyci@gmail.com.

BLOG // ZINES // LIVE EVENTS
PODCASTS // RADIO // VIDEO

TYCI.ORG.UK

ROSE MCDOWALL

Olivia Carr interviews the ex-Strawberry Switchblade member on the release day of her debut solo album, Cut With The Cake Knife.

Cut With The Cake Knife is part of an archival project looking back over your 34 year career. Creatively, is it important for you to look back?

Cut With The Cake Knife has a lot of Strawberry Switchblade stuff and a lot of stuff I went on to do after which were never released. Looking back is important for me - it's part of who I am…

Your image is very distinctive. Would you say you use fashion as a means of self-expression?

When I was young, my mum gave me a mini sewing machine and I made clothes for my dolls before moving on to making clothes for myself. I made gloves, catsuits and learned how to make thigh-length boots out of old pairs of shoes and fabric to match any outfit. I used to make everything myself.

From a very early age it was clear that I was a bit of any individual. I was a little bit of a loner but I always knew what I liked, so I was never lost. I knew who I was. When I was growing up I was really inspired by the 1960s style. I really don't like most '80s fashion. I felt that I was born in the wrong era, and really wished I could have been a teenager in the '60s as I loved the fashion and make-up of the '60s. But then, at exactly the right time, punk happened. It was there for me to lean on and became a way for me to express myself. It was youth culture, freedom, and a license for me to be who I was…

A lot of the songs on the record have lyrics which are highly personal and emotive. Does song writing represent catharsis for you?

There's a lot of pain from the past that I'm still letting go of. It's about me dealing with my demons and exploring how to express my emotions in a positive way.

This is an excerpt. To read the full article visit tyci.org.uk.

Heather O'Donnell caught up with the poet and activist at their Glasgow CCA show in May.

I love the line in Jellyfish *"I'll tell you these poems, they are my birth marks"*. When thinking about the need to write and share our stories it's a really inspiring comparison. Can you tell me a bit about when you first started writing poetry?

You know when you first start writing at school and you get the little callus? I was five years old and I remember running home and telling my mother that my hand was changing shape to prove that I was a writer. But I think that I didn't discover poetry until when I was around twelve or thirteen; I started writing a little then. In college I studied writing, but it wasn't until after college that I discovered spoken word and had that pull to be doing it all of the time. I had that feeling that I wasn't myself unless I was writing.

I read that you write to music. What music do you find works for you?

I've been writing to music for about a decade now, my writing is very metered and has always been really rhythmic. I think I probably write more similarly to the way a songwriter would than a lot of poets. I write out loud, I write running around my house. I'm not actually sitting down typing when I'm writing, I'm running around listening for

the sound and listening for how it might work with the music. I have a lot of friends who are musicians and so we'll write to each other, I might write a poem and ask them to write a song to it or vice versa. I listen to a lot of different kinds of music when I'm writing - sometimes I'll spend an entire year just writing different poems to the same song, over and over, because it's a song that works.

I also love your use of quantum imagery as a way to shake people up, and see that we are all part of this planet we are sharing; to see our common humanity. Where do you find inspiration for some of the images you create with your poems, as they seem to resonate with so many people?

Sometimes if I'm walking around that day, I'll just write down things that I see, random things that might seem like they don't connect but when I go through the writing process I try to find places where those things do connect. I was doing an interview recently where they asked me a lot about my relationship with God. It was interesting because I talk a lot about God in my poems, but I never really know what I mean by God. I think something in my spiritual beliefs that I'm constantly always forming it's about the places where we all connect and where all things connect. And I guess I most often think of that as God. So I guess just thinking of two things that we might not necessarily assume have anything in common and then finding the things that do.

There's been a real surge in spoken word scenes in the last couple of years. What do you think about this generation and their ability to make change happen?

I think some of positivity is just being willing to have moments of feeling absolutely hopeless and just giving yourself that, and using that as a place to bounce back from. I've always leaned towards the side of hope, and I think hope as a concept is not much without the action between it. People create what's possible. I'm almost forty now and typically the shows that I do most of the audience are twenty years younger than me. I learn so much from each show, when I read a poem on stage someone will come up after me and tell me what might have been problematic with it. They'll teach me something about what I've been talking about that I didn't know before. And I feel so consistently inspired by people, especially young people. I do feel positive, and with spoken word, the act of telling our stories is so healing. Just the revealing of ourselves and specifically the reminding other people that they're not alone in what they're feeling. Every time you tell a story about yourself or about your life you give somebody else permission to tell theirs too and if that all dominos, I think something beautiful happens.

Do you have any advice for those wanting to get into activism but unsure where to start?

There are so many places! I would say paying attention to what moves you and what your strengths are. The ways that you feel you could most

contribute; we all contribute in different ways and there are things that lots of people do that I would never be able to pull off. So just tapping into where you have the most to contribute. And that might change every year. What will also change is your passions, what really moves you emotionally. And to just go through life with the idea of being of service; offering something to the world that contributes to it being more gentle than it is now. And just paying attention, I think there's so much we can look at and get gloomy about but spending time paying attention to what people are doing that's really awesome and having faith in the hearts of people. So taking the time to pay attention is in itself really aspiring. The art of giving is not really a selfless thing, because it's so helpful to you too.

How do you prepare yourself mentally for public speaking? I feel like moving away from focus on the self, which is what your poetry does surely helps, but I am still in awe of your amazingly calm and powerful delivery.

I do get stage fright and I have for fifteen years. I'm a nervous public speaker, which is funny. I've been trying to write a screenplay about people who do things for a living that they're terrified of. I heard once that the amount of nervousness you get for a public speaking event is equivalent to the amount of respect you have for it. So whenever I'm up on stage and I'm shaking I'm thinking, 'oh wow, I'm shaking with respect!' The thing I think that has helped me the most on stage is just deciding to let the poem fill me up and let the

poem live, and just channel my energy into the poem.

I can't wait to read your book Pansy. For anyone who doesn't know, can you tell us a bit about it?

I self identify as a pansy in terms of it being a play on gender and my friends have been calling me a pansy in a really sweet way for years. I like the idea of feeling like a pansy - so it's sort of taking a gentle crack at anyone who might use that as an insult ever and also twisting it on gender a little bit. My friend Levi also identifies as a pansy and I have a picture of him as a little kid on the cover of the book. People always think it's me, but no it's his cute little face on there.

Which poets or fellow activists do you admire?

There are so many! The people that I've been reading recently are Danaz Smith, he's amazing you should really check him out. Claudia Rankin, Rachel McKibbins, Buddy Wakefield. Bell Hooks is actually a huge inspiration and I'm always learning from whatever she's writing. There's also the poet Mary Oliver. She writes about leaves and lichens, rivers and streams and there's so much that I think is activism in it just because it's a celebration of the earth that we live in.

What's the best part about doing what you do?

Every time I get onstage, or when I was walking around the park today sometimes I could just start crying. I mean I'm a big crier but I think I cannot believe this is what

I'm doing with my life. It was my dream years ago and just one of those distant dreams you never really thought was possible. The fact that this is what I've been doing for the last decade, driving and flying around and reading poems to people just feels like such a blessing. I would say my favourite part of it is how open hearted the people are that come to the shows. How much my heart continually opens just in having conversations with people after, or sometimes even during the shows. Recently people have just been throwing up their hand and asking a question mid show and I sort of love it when it happens, it's really sweet. You know tonight everybody is going to come here from a different day. Somebody fell in love today and somebodies grandmother passed away today and we all end up in the same room feeling what we feel. I like to be around people who are willing to feel what they feel, and so that part I think is the best.

THIS ARTICLE IS A ZINE EXCLUSIVE! TO READ OUR OTHER INTERVIEWS WITH ANDREA, HEAD TO TYCI.ORG.UK. FOR MORE ON ANDREA'S WORK, VISIT ANDREAGIBSON.ORG.

LES VOIZINES

Stacey Walton talks to Gerlin, co-founder of the zine-loving Belgian collective.

Tell us a bit about Les VoiZines and what you do.

Les VoiZines started because I had been wanting to organise a zinefest for years but I just didn't know who to ask to organise it with me. I had seen Valentine a couple of times when she passed by in the shop where I work and I always thought she looked like a cool girl (this one time she was wearing a Beat Happening tee and that made me sure she was very cool). Then I found out she was in this collective that made a quarterly zine and that's why I decided to just add her on Facebook and send her a message telling her how much I love her work and if by chance she was up for organising something around zines together. Lucky for me she was and we started having meetings every Monday. She lives around the corner from me so it was very easy to meet up. That's also where our name came from, it's a play on words on voisines, French for neighbours.

Why did you decide to establish Voi Zines?

We decided to establish Les VoiZines because we both thought Gent was sorely lacking when it came to the zine community. Not that there weren't enough zinesters around, but that there was nothing tying them together. Both Antwerp and Brussels have these big annual events celebrating independent publications and we wanted Gent to have one of its own as well.

From the beginning though we wanted to focus on very small and independent zines, where the DIY aesthetic is still very much alive. A lot of other zinefests are more professional when it came to the participants, more

established artists so you will. We really wanted to shine a light on the younger ones.
We are very lucky that we have the support of the city of Gent. They have a special program for people under 30 where you can apply for a grant for an event. We did that and received their full support so that's how we manage to do this financially. We're super grateful for that!

Do you make zines yourself? If so, do you draw from any particular influences?

I do make zines myself, sporadically. I have always been very interested in the culture and scene surrounding it and did a music zine that ran for three editions about 5 years ago. It was a very exciting way of meeting new people and getting my (and my friend who I was doing it with) stuff out there, especially as I love music so much.
I've also done some zines for an event just for fun and then one on film. And for Les VoiZines I'm now making one that's a collection of vintage labels and tags that I've been collecting in the vintage shop where I work part-time.
I don't think I draw from a particular influence but what got me into zines first was the riot grrrl movement. I love that whole DIY look and the passion that goes with it. I'm also just an overly nostalgic person so that's definitely got something to do with it.

In an increasing digital world, why do you think zine culture is still in existence and seemingly on the up?

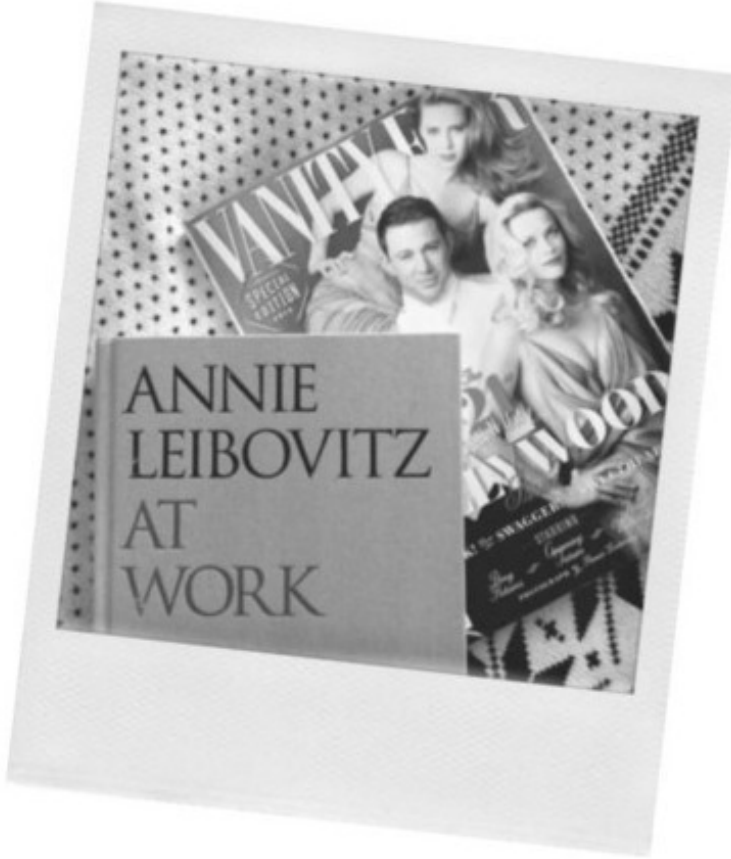
I just think it's something so special. It's tangible, it's tactile and it's unique and often only available in limited quantities. I also think that for young artists it's a relatively easy way to make some money and also cheap for people who want to support an artist but can't afford that much. I've always found it incredibly charming and special, it's something very personal often and also exciting because the topics can be on just about anything.

What can we expect at Les VoiZines events?

At our event you can expect a big zine fair with people from all over Belgium and even France having a table and selling their wares. We'll also have a communal table with all the zines that people who couldn't attend sent to us. I already know I'm gonna be so broke from wanting to buy all the zines...
Other than that there will be a workshop on how to make your own zine and you'll be able to tune your underwear with one of the participants in the fair called Vite. And then lastly Tieten Met Haar, a collective that releases a quarterly zine will be having a talk about what it is they do. And there will be plenty of vegan snacks and beverages.

LES VOIZINES TOOK PLACE 11 AND 12 APRIL IN GENT. FOR MORE INFORMATION ON THE GROUP, VISIT FACEBOOK.COM/ LESVOIZINESGENT.

PHOTOGRAPHER RACHAEL WRIGHT WRITES ABOUT HER IDOL, ANNIE LEIBOVITZ.



There was a time, early on in my photography career, when my learning curve had plateaued and I felt like I was getting nowhere. Something had gone awry on a shoot and I had spiralled into negative thinking. I lay in bed that Saturday morning thinking maybe I should just give up. Then Annie Leibovitz popped into my head. I don't know why. I didn't know much about her at the time, so I started googling her work and finding out about her.

Later on that day, I was sitting in a bagel store in Brooklyn, still considering quitting. As I sulked in the window looking out onto the street, a book on the secondhand bookstall I was staring straight through came into focus... It was American Music by Annie Leibovitz. I decided it was a sign to carry on… and thank god I did. I keep a copy of that book on my desk now.

Since then, I've educated myself in all things Leibovitz and I now see her as a kind of lady spirit animal, with whom I share some parallels. Like me, the early part of Annie's career, where she really got going, was spent on the road with musicians. Both photography and the music business are male-dominated environments and it can really feel like a boys' club at times. I'm sure it was even more so for Annie in the 1970s, when she was on tour with The Rolling Stones, for Rolling Stone.
I'm sometimes asked what it's like to be a female photographer. It's a question I never really have an answer

for because I've only ever been female, with no immediate plans to change that. I don't have another experience to compare it with, so it's difficult to articulate whether my attributes as a photographer are because I'm a woman, or because I'm me. Annie puts it both perfectly and succinctly: "I just always think of myself as a photographer. I have never separated those things."
I love the aesthetics of unmistakably American photography and that's what Annie's work is. It doesn't get more American than the iconic cover for Bruce Springsteen's Born In The USA. In her portraits, there's a real intimacy, along with character and sometimes humour. You can tell she's thought not just about the photograph itself, but the person she's photographing - who they are and what she wants to say about them. There's always a story, even when it's just a single photo. I especially like how Annie takes popular culture - something that's often seen (and portrayed) as lowbrow - and makes it artistic and aspirational.

Her later work is more 'produced', involving armies of assistants, stylists and retouchers, as she's shooting for the likes of Vogue and Vanity Fair these days. While I prefer her older work, I like that Annie says she saw the step up from Rolling Stone as an opportunity to develop her techniques and ideas, and evolve as a photographer. "Photography's like this baby that needs to be fed all the time," she says. "It's always hungry."

Not even Annie Leibovitz, with her fame, money and incredible body of work has become complacent. She continues to see herself as a work in progress.
People like Anna Wintour, Graydon Carter and Jann Wenner talk affectionately about Annie's passion, her work ethic, her dedication, her perfectionism and how much she cares. She commands respect and that respect is based solely on her work and the way she produces that work.

I believe it's important to have role models. Successful predecessors in whose footsteps you can follow, while carving out your own path.

Annie Leibovitz inspires me to want to do better, to strive to achieve greatness and to have the balls (or brave ladyparts) to say, "I want to be exceptional." It's not easy saying that out loud and I almost deleted it, actually. Because society teaches us that we must be 'ladylike', compliant, submissive, bordering on apologetic and to silence ourselves for fear of not being these things.
Well, fuck that.
I want to be exceptional.

See more of Rachael's own photography, visit rachaelwright.co.uk.

MANIC MUM DAY

A.M.S. writes about the realities of living with a bi-polar parent.

It is a well-known fact that the human brain blocks out periods of intense trauma. Now, it is only through brief late night discussions with my younger sister, that I uncover glimpses of light in an otherwise foggy haze. Snapshots of a time my unconscious mind has decided is best forgotten. It seems illogical that she can remember so much of our mother's mental illness as she was just eight when mum was initially hospitalised, but then she was particularly close to her. I, on the other hand, was a rather independent ten year old, soldiering on regardless and an expert at switching over to autopilot. It is only now, physically removed from family life, that I am able to ponder.

From what I have picked up from the irritatingly polite, 'How IS your mother?' conversations, it is believed that the bi-polar manic depression she suffered from, stemmed from undiagnosed postnatal depression. In her own eyes, mum began spiraling towards a breakdown in the early nineties. A perfectionist in both her work and in motherhood, she asserts it was brought on by the stress of trying to juggle a particularly taxing writing career with her high ideals of family life. She would later tell me that one of the most painful experiences was when my sister, aged six at the time, crept into her room where she was working on her harrowing crime book - a true life murder story about three abused women - and placed a

sad little note in jumbled writing on her lap which read 'Dear Mummy, I am hungry.' Mum had been so preoccupied with her work that she had completely forgotten to make us dinner.

One aspect of mania is the almost physical pain the suffered has to cope with from hyper-acuity, resulting in extreme sensitivity to light, sound, colour and smell. I can remember a shopping trip in preparation for a school trip and mum downright refused to let me buy a certain sunblock. I was furious and simultaneously frightened at the frenzied look in her eyes and the very real emotion she was venting at this product. Now, it seems ridiculously simple - although she thought some colours had almost healing properties, others were deadly. This particular sunblock's packaging had the worst possible colour combination in my mother's deluded eyes, incorporating 'unbearably bright and dangerous' red and 'treacherous, mocking and sinister' orange.

The ordeal of my mother's very public displays of paranoia were in no way as distressing as those as my sister and I viewed in private. Her insomnia led her to wandering the house hallucinating, and the smothering darkness of endless nights made the threats she imagined seem real, and terrifying. Mum wasn't really mum anymore - as she had passed into a bizarre world with a logic of its own and deep down, I was scared I didn't know who she was anymore.

By 1994 the extreme stress and conflict that my mother was dealing with inside her head peaked, triggering her admission into hospital. Although we knew it was 'to make mummy better', having our mother completely removed from us was horrific, and my sister and I were both very ill. I remember going to visit her one day after school: the shadowy ward was eerie, with murky green tiles along the walls and as far as I was concerned, mum was surrounded by common psychopaths. She obviously felt the same, as once the sedation had worn off and she realised she was locked-in; she 'escaped' to come back and see us. She was dragged back instantly.

Years later, following another weekend of teenage frustration I remember sobbing on my bed, desperately wishing for mum to be normal. Chemically, today she is thanks to a concoction of drugs which have enabled her to regain her 'insight' (the ability to differentiate between reality and delusions).

The problem now lies with us. Although mum never lost her articulation or intellect at the height of her mania, she did lose a 'normal' relationship with her daughters and that is what we are trying to rebuild now.

NO MEANS NO

Sophie Kromholz writes about her experience at a recent pro-equality event.

I teach in a small university town. Although my background is in Art History, I find myself involved in a wide variety of other fields at the small Liberal Arts program that I work at.

I was delighted when I received an e-mail requesting I speak about gender and feminism at a pro-equality demonstration. My students had put me forward, which means the world to me. The event itself was cheerful. Students from different departments gathered with banners and students from the conservatory played joyful drums. We marched across the bridge to the market square where I spoke. The gist of the talk was about being good to each other.

What I can't help but think of now, when I look back at the march, is the young man that asked me for a copy of my speech afterwards. The sound had been iffy and he said he hadn't been able to hear me clearly. I'd ended up speaking through a megaphone and mic combo. So I said I'd email a copy. He sent me an email back and asked me out. I declined. I pointed out that I was probably a little too old for him. He responded and called me an ageist and offered to forward a copy of my talk to me. I explained I didn't feel I was being an ageist, but that there was an additional power dynamic which made me uncomfortable. He's a student at the university where I teach. Additionally, I can't commit or invest in anyone right now. He responded and kept

pushing the matter, this time with increased sexual innuendo and demands. However, no means no, and I grew uncomfortable. I didn't owe him an explanation to begin with. He asked me out, fair play. But when I said no, this somehow didn't register or else seemed insufficiently valid. I felt like my speech was being used against me, to bully me into saying yes.

What disappoints me the most is that this isn't an unfamiliar story, for me or for any of my friends. The only time I have said no and had someone back down without further pushing or without lashing out at me, is when I have made it clear that I am dating someone. The rhetoric is that it is only acceptable that I turn someone down if I am off the market. That if I am single, it is open season and I better say yes. If I don't, this reflects negatively on me somehow. How is this ok?

I have the right to say no, and to have this right respected, just as you do. Being good to each other also means recognizing boundaries and respecting them. Instead of prodding these boundaries and trying to gage how firm they are, and when they don't budge trying to suss out why I have placed them there, how about just taking it from there and moving forward? Somehow this does not occur. Somehow it is acceptable that you push me, that you bully me and that you assume I am up for grabs.

Going to the pro-equality demonstration, speaking there, and the aftermath, reminded me: I have a voice. And I am going to use it. No means no.

SEEKING CHANGE & FINDING YOUR PEOPLE

Kate Bailey writes about feminism and community (and has us TYCI gals all totes emosh reading it).

One of the empowering elements of the resurgence in feminism is the sense of community it has been creating. For many of us, the idea of feminism is so closely linked to core values - attached to justice, equality, fairness and respect to humans. So often, subconsciously and otherwise, our values dictate who are, how we act and how we respond. In 2015, we have a unique opportunity: to engage with communities that have been created to service the aforementioned values. Undeniably, it is unity that gives volume to the voice calling for change…

Humans are unlike anything but one another. We need one another. So, we need to stop acting like fairness has room for opinions. We need to stop acting like basic human rights is a negotiation of wealth and rhetoric. We have the opportunity to do that, together, in various ways and mediums. There is a satisfaction and empowerment in doing something because you believe in it - as if, just for a moment, what you're demanding is more important than leaving it as it is - you create change. When we become apart of communities and movements via the sharing of our most intimate values, we become connected to other humans. There's a contagious immensity and empowerment in the cultivation of respect for those in your community, and for the sweeping momentum built by those who believed in something and did something about it; people who are genuinely fulfilled in seeking change on behalf of others.

But why should you do something, when you could do not-something?

…[In] an age where we are communicating more than ever, it's the changes we make and how we speak about them that are the first cogs in mass social change. So, is doing something going to need to be a demand in a life that already demands far too much? No, it just has to be awareness… Even if you influence another through discussion, or you go all

out and join the front line - you, and the world, are better off. The world is a scene right now, and we have the right to demand fairness for ourselves and others.

And, what if you do want to do more? Where do you start?

Find something you respect and involve yourself with a skill set that will contribute, in some way, and that you would enjoy to use. Thinking how to untangle ideation from that idea, there is but one option.

Practical example: I've been writing and making podcasts with TYCI for some time, finding the organisation through some vague Internet meanderings - a podcast recommendation on SoundCloud. When I first connected with TYCI, it barely occurred to me why I wanted to contribute to this over anything else. But, I suppose, finding it through music, it made me feel like feminism was connected to things I value experiencing: music. That I wanted to connect with women making music, because it felt as though there were far too many not receiving recognition.

Despite inherent beliefs in gender equality, I always struggled with how to communicate it and find ways learn more about it. It was the normalised and casual way that TYCI content explored feminism, and the positivity of simply giving representation to women, that seemed to align with a value I never knew I had. In working alongside TYCI, I realised how greatly change relies on individuals making a decision and taking action in support of their values. In doing so, and seeing the work that goes into keeping something like TYCI running, I see a group of people who made the choice and live it everyday, without grandiose or to seek personal gain. The impact of this in my life has been to be aware and motivated, inspired and able to develop a strong voice and understanding in my day-to-day life - because I feel as though such a big part of who I am and what I want to achieve in my life is tied into the values I share with TYCI…

There's comfort in connecting with like-minded people, and empowerment. It's hard for those things to have a negative connotation within your life. Community can be an amazing bridge between values and purpose. If we want to capitalise on recent exposure and progress within feminism (but even, any issue), we must begin with awareness to facilitate change. Find your people. They're out there.

This is an excerpt. To read the full article, head to tyci.org.uk. For more of Kate's writing, keep an eye on our website or visit littlejoy.de.

HAPPY HOLIDAYS FROM TYCI!

See you in 2016.